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SUBJECT: UKRAINIAN CRISIS: INITIAL REACTIONS FROM MOSCOW

Classified By: DCM Daniel A. Russell. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) In the wake of President Yushchenko's decision to disband the Rada, the GOR issued a statement early April 3 urging Ukrainian political forces to demonstrate wisdom and responsibility, and to act within the law. State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachev termed Yushchenko's decree "a mistake," saying there were no constitutional grounds for such an action. Viktor Sorokin, Director of the MFA's Third CIS Department (Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova), told us that Russia believes that Ukrainian political forces must compromise and that the number one priority should be stability. He viewed the current crisis as a continuation of the 2004 "schism." Sorokin noted that the crisis had caused Yushchenko to cancel his expected April 3 visit to Moscow, where the two presidents had planned to sign a Russia-Ukraine roadmap for the next two years.

¶2. (C) Sorokin observed that the Orange Revolution's real achievements (freedoms of press and assembly) had been upstaged by its leaders' struggle for power. He added that the best solution would be for Yushchenko to retract the decree -- and seek a workable compromise. Sorokin warned that a country undergoing "eternal" elections "cannot hope to accomplish much." Russia does not need an unstable Ukraine, he underlined.

¶3. (C) Ukrainian Embassy Political Counselor Myroslava Shcherbatyuk commented to us April 3 that Yushchenko lacked a legitimate legal basis for dissolving the Rada. Shcherbatyuk feared that Yushchenko's decision had thoroughly discredited him in Russian eyes. A tearful Shcherbatyuk told us that she and her colleagues worry most about the widening split between the country's East and West. She had been at the Maidan when the people of Ukraine gave the country to Yushchenko and now "we have only ourselves to blame."

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